(c) During the public hearings no fresh requests of castes/sub-castes/synonyms/ communities was received.

(d) It would be known on receipt of advice (s) of the Commission to the Central Government.

Women's Panel seeks due Status

3593. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention have been drawn to the news report appearing in The Stateman dated the 24th June, 1998, under the caption "Women's panel seks due status", and

(b) if so, Government reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The National Commission for Women is a national level apex body set up under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. As per the Warrant of Precedence, Smt. Mohini Giri, Chairperson of the Commission, has been placed at Article 17 equivalent to the rank of a HIgh Court Judge. So far as the Members of the Commission are concerned, they are placed at Article 25 of the Warrant of precedence eequivalent to the rank of Additional Secretary in the Government of India. Further, the State Governments have been advised to extend all facilities and cooperation to the Chairperson and Members of the Commission whenever they visit States on official purposes.

Central Aid for tribal problem in Tamil Nadu

3594. SHRI N. THALAVAI SUNDARAM: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Tamil Nadu has sought Central aid for dealing with the problems of the tribals in the State this year;

(b) if so, the details of the specific problems and Central aid sought; and

(c) what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) Government of Tamil Nadu has not sought Central aid for any specific scheme for dealing with the problems of tribals in the state during 1998-99. However, the State's Minister for Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare has submitted a memorandum recently listing the following suggestions:

(a) For increasing the quantum of SCA to TSP and grants under Article 275 (i) for opening more schools.

(b) Enlarging the scope of the schemes of residential and Ashram Schools to provide for construction of school buildings and purchase of computers.

(c) For modifying the norms of scheme of educational complex to cover areas of female literacy upto 25%.

(d) For enlarging the scope of the scheme of Vocational Training Institutes to provide for more assistance; and

(e) For improving the basic amenities for tribals in the State.

(c) Plan allocation for the Ministry is made scheme-wise. Ministry in turn releases the funds to the states in proportion to their ST population and in accordance with other guidelines under the Schemes of SCA to TSP and Grants under Article 275 (i). In respect of other schemes, the releases are in accordance with the specific proposals received from the State Governments. As SCA to TSP is only an additive to the state's Tribal

Sub-Plan it is for the state Government to increase the flow to Tribal Sub-Plan from the State Plan resources under Tribal Sub-Plan strategy for implementing various projects/schemes of tribal welfare. As for enlarging the scope of the existing schemes, the Central Government may consider the same, if specific, detailed proposals with proper justification are sent in respect of each scheme by the State Government.

Scheme for Mentally Handicapped

3595. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have launched the National Pilot Project for early intervention for mentally retarded children;

(b) if so, the details of this scheme;

(c) whether Government have received representations from Andhra Pradesh for improving the schemes for mentally handicapped people; and

(d) if so, the details of such representations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Pilot Project is formulated by Central Institute on Mental Retardation, Kerala, with the support of grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Deptt. of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development. The objetives of the project are:

(1) to integrate the mentally retarded child in the family and community;

(2) make early intervention in the lives of mentally retarded children and provide them early development inputs;

(3) prepare the mentally retarded to receive further develomental and vocational education;

(4) train professionals to work in the field; and

(5) create awareness in society to bring focus on the mentally retarded.

The project is launched in six States, namely, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

VRCs to assess the redidual ability of disabled in Gujarat

3596. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up Vocational Rehabilitation Centres (VRCs) in Gujarat to assess the residual ability of the disabled, arrange for their training and provide them employment;

(b) if so, the details thereof, Centre-wise;

(c) whether Government propose to set-up some more VRCs in the State in the near future; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There are two Vocational Rehabilitation Centres in Gujarat located one each in Ahmedabad and Vadodara. The Centre at Vadodara exclusively caters the needs of the women disabled.

(c) and (d) At present, Vocational Rehabilitation Centres are not established in all the States/UTs. Therefore, attempts are being made to establish at least one Vocational Rehabilitation